

Terry Atkinson presented his commissioned paper EXHIBITIONISM, for the occasion of Jeffrey Charles Henry Peacock's exhibition CRITICAL DÉCOR: WHAT WORKS!

CRITICAL DÉCOR was a determined bid to reformulate the conventions of the exhibition apparatus and disengage the relations of production with the relations of distribution, which are immobilised in their bind to one another in the art system.

SK: Thanks all for coming and this afternoon's talk is the final event for the occasion of Jeffrey Charles Henry Peacock's exhibition CRITICAL DÉCOR WHAT WORKS!

Previous to this, we've had three critical bouts led by Michael Hampton, Alex Bowen and Lynda Morris who finished them off last night. I do think the framing of these critical bouts really... not really, but slightly which is good enough, set them apart from the usual polite complicity that exists between actors in the artworld. A big thing to come from these sessions was the reliance that the art system has on the hermetic compliance of the maintenance of the status quo.

This afternoon I can drop this stupid artificial fighting language because it's a straightforward talk given by Terry Atkinson, who from the early 60s has sustained a very formidable critique against the prevailing ideologies of the art system, and in particular the distortion that the market has had on the whole apparatus, including, importantly, art education. Terry has had a long ongoing exchange with JCHP and the latest output of this is his essay *Exhibition and Exposition* which breaks down his response into the chapters Exhibitionism, Stockholm Syndrome, Shift-work and Referencing, Excuse and Exhibiting. Terry will elaborate on this essay, the exhibition, on JCHP's practice and CRITICAL DÉCOR: WHAT WORKS! and it really just leaves me to say first of all thank you very much to Terry for doing this and I feel very privileged that Terry's here in the closing week of LGP. And of course thanks to JCHP for ending LGP because it brings every cynicism I've had with what I've been doing with the programme, right into my office and gallery space so it's been an entirely welcome end.

TA: Just an opening shot, last time I did anything public here, a couple of years ago when I did a joint exchange with Owen Hatherley and the guy I shared the exchange with was Dave Bainbridge who died last June. It was a big loss to me, I had known him since 1958, probably my oldest friend and was one of the founders of Art & Language. He was a very loyal friend so this is a dedication to Dave and it's hopefully put out in the spirit of an ongoing enquiry which he always promoted and modeled.

Note.

The main body of this text was delivered as a talk at the exhibition *Critical Décor: What Works* by Jeffrey Charles Henry Peacock (JCHP) at Lanchester Gallery Projects, Coventry on 28th February, 2014. Apart from some condensed references, the notes referring to the text were not included in the talk.

EXHIBITIONISM

I begin with an attempt to set the specific issue of concern of this talk in a broad sociopolitical frame by setting out two brief scenarios, one widely political, the other one more personal. Let us call this issue, for now anyway, whether an exhibition can be used as a critique of exhibiting without the task itself appearing to be illogical.

First, on the wider level:

I take the main characteristic of the system we live in Western democracies to be that of capitalist accumulation, and that this system is now driven relentlessly by a grouping of what I call the Corporate Tyranny (the term is not an original one of mine, I copy it from Noam Chomsky). And although the precursor formations of today's Corporate Tyranny were formed and activated immediately after WW2, for my purposes here it is worth noting that since especially the 1970s the Corporate Tyranny has been much more concerned with the advancement of finance capital rather than industrial capital. It has subordinated the requirements of industrial capital to those of finance capital. And it is also worth remembering that one of the main mechanisms through which finance capital has gained its hegemonic position in Western democracies is that of accumulation through dispossession and on a global scale. Thus in this pattern of development the Corporate Tyranny is not only a financial elite, just as significantly it has come to dominate the legislative elites – in our own case here, the elected governments of in the transatlantic world, the Western countries. We can roughly characterize the main players of the Corporate Tyranny as some such as the Party of Wall Street, the Caucus of the City of London and the European Bourses such as Frankfurt, Paris and Zurich, and the Lobbyists of the Global Mega-corporations. All are necessarily linked through the common drive to attain and maintain the 3% compound interest. [1] In gaining this dominant position of control and influence in Western societies, the Corporate Tyranny has also become, through its increasing financial hold on them, a dominant player in presiding over and regulating cultural institutions. The institution I am going to try and say more about in the context of remarking on this exhibition, *Cultural Décor*, is the institution of the avant-garde – more particularly the Corporate Tyranny's control of what I call the avant-garde model of the artistic subject (which I abbreviate to the acronym AGMOAS). [2]

Second, on a less broad and more personal level:

My entire formal education programme through which I passed during the period 1945-64 was a manifestation of the arrangements of what is called the Bretton Woods Accord. In my case this was what then was called primary and junior school (1945-50), grammar school (1950-58), art school (1958-64). I have not the time here to detail out a thorough exposition of the history of the Bretton Woods Accord except to state that this was an international agreement set up in 1944 which was concerned with the kind of public policy it was thought, that capitalism should develop post WW2. Two of the main architects of the agreement were Harry Dexter White for the United States and John Maynard Keynes for the United Kingdom. [3] The Bretton Woods Accord was the predominant financial arrangement of British public policy, including education, during the period I attended the above mentioned type of schools. All my education was free, in my case courtesy of grants from what was then called the West Riding Education Authority. I note the latter point to mark a contrast between my financial passage through art school and that of many, perhaps most, art students today. The Bretton Woods Accord remained more or less intact until Richard Nixon in 1971 initiated the major break in it when what is now called the Nixon Shock was enacted. What this enactment comprised was that Nixon unilaterally cancelled the direct convertibility of the US dollar into gold. This enactment was a considerable achievement of the Corporate Tyranny lobby against the Bretton Woods Accord which had insistently been conducted during the prior twenty-five years since the end of WW2. [4] One of the primary aims of the Corporate Tyranny lobby was to subject all public services to increasing privatization, not least education. And the increasing privatization of education is one of the important instruments through which the Corporate Tyranny controls and regulates cultural institutions, not least art school education. And through this regulation of art school education the Corporate Tyranny increasingly directs and influences the character of the AGMOAS. [5]

So to focus for a few minutes on the exhibition, I am going to endeavor to construct a brief analysis of two sets of relations. These relations I take to constitute both the act of art practice and the exposure and distribution of the products of that practice. These are the sets of relations

- (1) The relation between exhibitionism and avant-gardism
- (2) The relation between practice and career.

It is no (1), the relation between exhibitionism and avant-gardism that I shall mostly attempt to expand upon in these remarks

To explain more what I mean by 'exhibitionism' and 'avant-gardism' the following.

I attempted to state what I mean by the term exhibitionism in a short section from an essay titled *Exhibition and Exposition* that I wrote for the publication *Critical Decor* which is part of this exhibition. I quote the relevant passage thus.

“The main target [OF THE EXHIBITION] is itself the event of exhibiting. What might be called some such as exhibitionism? The whole organum seems to rest on the question ‘Why exhibit?’ Since the event of the exhibition is the standard procedure for artists to expose their work and is therefore a critical part of the relations of distribution (hereafter ROD) it seems to be a dominant force on many, probably most, artist’s relations of production (hereafter ROP). Thus, a second question, how significant an influence is exhibitionism upon the ROP? It is perhaps worth pointing out that in a list of the stream of twentieth century art isms (say Cubism, Constructivism, Conceptualism) then just formulating that exhibitionism is a problem seems to indicate that this particular ism is not of quite the same character as Cubism etc. Exhibitionism seems less positive of housing a pictorial strategy, and is therefore more dissonant in respect of the regular career gradient of contemporary artists.” [6]

This is so since exhibitionism seems to belong to a different kind of logical category **from** that **of** cubism, etc.

In the case of the term avant-gardism I hold it to be the act of a certain prominent form, perhaps the dominant form, of the twentieth century model of the artistic subject. A form of the artistic subject I call the avant-garde model of the artistic subject, which I shorten to the acronym AGMOAS. In twentieth century art world talk this model of the artistic subject was taken to be the producer of what was called ‘advanced’ or ‘progressive’ art practice, and it continues to be thought of in this way in the twenty first century art world. Thus, in the context of considering further the institutionalization of the AGMOAS, I take it that one of the main aims of this exhibition is to focus on the role of the event of exhibiting in the construction of this current model of the artistic subject.

So, keeping the foregoing quote in mind the following six points, starting by repeating the two sets of relations, (1) and (2), set out above:

- (1) The relations between exhibitionism and avant-gardism.
- (2) The relations between practice and career

and then following, the reminders that:

- (3) Exhibitionism is not a necessary condition of making a practice
- (4) Exhibitionism is not a sufficient condition of having a career (successful or not, which ought to remind us to pose the question, is there such a thing as an unsuccessful career? Which question suggests that we might also need to establish a definition of what does and what does not constitute a career.)

And linked,

- (5) What may seem an absurd question but posed in a purely rhetorical sense - Is it possible to have a career without having a practice?

Which will, at some point, require

- (6) The task of defining what constitutes or does not constitute a practice, and what does or does not constitute a **career**. This can perhaps be used to further focus some aspects of the issues raised by this exhibition if, for example, it

is considered in the light of the emergence, especially since the 1960s, of what can be called the complex and expanded character of art production. [7] This leads on to the further question of how the notion of practice is assigned quality, how it is decided that such and such an example of work is considered good practice and another example is decided to be bad practice and the countless decisions which assign positions between these poles of good and bad practice, the endless variations of less good practice and less bad practice until these two measures meet let us say somewhere in the middle. The matter of evaluating the procedures by which art is assigned quality inevitably, I guess, also raises the issue of the procedures used in deciding what is and what is not art. For instance to again point the matter into a historical and this time very local context here in Coventry, I'm thinking of A&L practice in the later 1960s which was considered not so much to be bad practice as not practice at all. [8] All the components of this exhibition, the ensemble of texts, dialogues, recordings, distributed poster texts, and the other sundry objects comprising this exhibition seem to me to raise, either directly or indirectly, all the topics so far touched upon in the foregoing remarks. Perhaps further aspects of these components of the exhibition will come up in later discussion here.

Despite the periodic outburst of what we might call populist incredulity and often outrage to what has been considered to be advanced practice during the twentieth century (e.g. the reaction to Carl Andre's brick sculptures at the Tate) avant-gardism has generally been equated with what above I have called advanced or progressive art practice? [8] It is a case where the French term is literally translated and adopted in English as standing for advanced practice. I guess, by this stage in these remarks, it is obvious that I am arguing that avant-gardism is now part of the institutionalized cultural framework of Western capitalist societies. Since the managers and grandees of this institutionalization continue to judge avant-gardism as advanced art then this, in turn, seems to generate a paradox – we might characterize it as some such as an institutionalization of anti-institutionalization. Thus, returning to one of the opening points made in these remarks, I am arguing that the Corporate Tyranny version of the AGMOAS is now an important cultural vehicle contributing to the act of capitalist accumulation. The paradox is additionally heightened by framing a further question, can an ongoing, as distinct from, let us say, a fixed advanced art practice count as an establishment institution? Does not placing together the terms 'fixed' and 'advanced' seem to hint that there is a contradiction somewhere in the idea of an institutionally certified AGMOAS?

Keeping the foregoing in mind, then consider the following chunk lifted from David Harvey's book *The Enigma of Capitalism*.

“Wholly new mechanisms of accumulation by dispossession have opened up. The emphasis upon intellectual property rights in the World Trade Organization negotiations (the so-called TRIPS agreement) point to ways in which the patenting and licensing of genetic materials, seed plasmas, and all manner of other products, can now be used against whole populations whose practices have played a crucial role in the development of those materials. Biopiracy is rampant and the pillaging of the world's stockpile of genetic resources is well underway, to the benefit of the pharmaceutical companies. The transformation of cultures, histories and intellectual creativity into commodities for sale entails dispossession both past and present of human creativity. Pop music is notorious for the appropriation and exploitation of grassroots culture and creativity. The monetary losses for the creators involved are, unfortunately, by no means the end of the story. Disruptions of social networks and destruction of social solidarities can be every bit as serious. Loss of social relations is impossible to recompense with money payment” [9]

Imbedded as we currently are in the Western art world within the institutionalized framework of the Corporate Tyranny's version of avant-gardism, it is perhaps hard to even consider the possibility of a world without the social relations of the Corporate Tyranny institutional reassembling of avant-gardism. Anyone who thinks art had in its earlier days, say, for example, the founding period of the AGMOAS leading up to the Paris Commune, a different and better version of avant-gardism and who also thinks that through a return to this earlier form that it might be possible to have an avant-gardism that contributes to a society attempting to achieve a more egalitarian distribution of wealth rather than one which is directly active in the exploit of capitalist accumulation, then, in my view, they should dispense with this illusory view. A new form of avant-gardism will have to be made – one that does what it says on the tin. This is a difficult event to conceive. And to me there is no consolation in talking of a social formation that discards the

notion of avant-garde art practice altogether. Movements that have discarded, in one way or another, the concept of the avant-garde may very well be worthy, but I am not at all sure that in the historical long run they can satisfy and fulfill the fundamental species requirement of the sustaining and pursuit of intellectual curiosity. A little later on from the section I have already quoted, David Harvey writes concerning the Zapatista movement in Mexico that has challenged capitalist accumulation by dispossession. Large parts of the Zapatista social programmes I have no reservation about at all. [10] However the movement has been brought to fairly wide media attention throughout the later 1990s and this has also revealed that a significant part of the cultural impetus of the movement rests primarily on fairly conservative protection of Mayan cultural forms, and this part of the Zapatista plea for social reconstruction I am more uneasy about. Perhaps in some respects the notion of protecting an indigenous culture runs counter to what I take to be the concept of the avant-garde. Here is what Harvey writes.

“Movements against dispossession of both sorts are widespread but inchoate, both geographically and in their organizing principles and political objectives. They often exhibit internal contradictions, as, for example, when indigenous populations claim back rights in areas that environmental groups regard as crucial to protect biodiversity. And partly because of the distinctive geographical conditions that give rise to such movements, their political orientation and modes of organization also differ markedly. The Zapatista rebels in Mexico, frustrated by the loss of control over their own lands and local resources and the lack of respect for their cultural history, did not seek to take over state power or accomplish a political revolution. They sought instead to work through the whole of civil society in a more open and fluid search for alternatives that would look to answer to their specific needs as a cultural formation, and to restore their own sense of dignity and self-respect. The movement avoided avant-gardism and refused to take on the role of a political party, seeking to form a political power bloc in which indigenous cultures would be central rather than peripheral to political power arrangements.”

Kindle edition [11]

The matter of cultural constraint is a far from straightforward issue to analyse. To more precisely focus on why this talk is taking place – the matter of JCHP’s exhibition, consider the following from JCHP’s text *The Distributed Poster Texts: July 2013 to January 2014* in the publication *Critical Décor: What Works*, but which I have altered slightly. Let us assume here that JCHP’s use, in the section from which I quote below, of the term ‘productive force’ does not carry the metaphysical baggage that a term like ‘life force’ or some such as ‘creative force’ often does, but means something like ‘the motive for producing’ – thus the quote with my alteration now reads:

“Consider that exhibitionism constrains **the motive for producing**, that the **condition of studio production** is hamstrung by the relations of distribution of art. Every art-like object appears to have been produced for its potential future exhibition. Every thing produced in the studio fits the shape of some predestined commodity life. This pervasive exhibitionism is the result of the ownership of the means of production being controlled beyond any reasonable boundary of the producer.” [12]

There is quite a lot to consider in this passage. For example, is JCHP suggesting that only constraints generated by exhibitionism are ipso facto undesirable, that is, that exhibitionism generates the wrong kind of constraints. If so this seems to imply, or at least does not rule out the possibility that exhibitionism could be productive if another set of constraints is in place. Or is it that exhibitionism is itself the constraint and in order to be released from these particular constraints some alternative to exhibitionism will have to be constructed? Or, more unlikely, is this JCHP subscribing, albeit unwittingly, to the deeply held art world view that creativity (whatever it might be) assumes its most potent, powerful and rewarding expression when it is unconstrained – when it has no constraints upon it at all. This latter is, rhetorically at least, a pretty widely held art world view. When used in respect of characterizing art production, and artists for that matter, then the use of terms like ‘challenging’ and ‘radical’ frequently rest upon what I take to be this comfortable but misleading assumption. An art world placebo if I ever observed one! In respect of the early formations of the AGMOAS then I guess Rimbaud’s behavior and thinking in his early years before his sojourn to East Africa, is characterized as as near unconstrained as we have seen. But, Rimbaud too had his constraints [13] Sticking with the JCHP text following the text down in the above quote, another concept that might warrant further inquiry is that of a ‘reasonable boundary’, not least since the notion of boundary itself suggests some kind of constraint. We would need to discuss perhaps what amounts to a ‘reasonable constraint’. According to the romantic

art school rhetorical account of it, avant-gardism has generally been more associated with acting in an unconstrained environment rather than one in which boundaries are observed. [14] My view is that the culture the Corporate Tyranny promotes has a very precise boundary, that of preserving the facility of capitalist accumulation by dispossession - which brings me back to my uneasy but committed sympathy for the Zapatista movement.

Notes

1. The drive for 3% compound interest is the basic data registering capitalist inspiration. It will also serve as a kind of statistical definition of capitalism. An appropriate point at which to recollect that it is reported that both J. P. Morgan and David Rockefeller described compound interest as the eighth wonder of the world – and two more redoubtable founders and forerunners of what became the Corporate Tyranny can hardly be cited. For the last thirty years this drive for 3% compound interest has been significantly augmented, geographically expanded and globally quickened through the introduction and increasing development of electronic communication networks. Certainly up to 2008 these developments had helped to foster the illusion that the operations of finance capital accumulation were democratic, since large sections of the public were persuaded by campaigns claiming that the internet was somehow inherently democratic, not least since it is the support for many social networking functions. The blanket character of this kind of propaganda tends to disguise the fact that whilst the Corporate Tyranny is certainly dependent on a highly developed horizontal network, it is a horizontal network that is hierarchically commanded. During the last decade more particularly, we have witnessed a number of events exposing the fallacies inherent in such propaganda, some of the specific aspects of these exposures of the problems being themselves made through social networks – Wikileaks and the Snowden exposures being perhaps the two most prominent – which may yet, paradoxically, prove the truth, or at least some substantial truths, that there are inherent democratic tendencies in the social networking structures, although, in the UK at least, the stories were initially broken by *The Guardian*. Curiously I note in *The Guardian* on the day I revise this note, February 28th 2014, the banner headline reads “Revealed: GCHQ intercepted webcam images from millions of Yahoo users”.

A book that engages in a long historical look at the development of communications technology is *Darwin Among the Machines*, George Dyson, Penguin Press, London, 1998. It is a very well written book and very informative, although I did find myself expressing caution toward the enthusiasm (not least toward what I took to be Dyson’s neoliberal political sympathy) with which Dyson appears to embrace the onset and predicted future manifestations (many of which seem to have happened) of the digital/electronic communications technologies.

However to more nearly focus on the fact of that the venue in which this talk is delivered is an art exhibition it is perhaps as well to remind ourselves of the strong link between the Corporate Tyranny (hereafter CT) and the current form and complexion of the AGMOAS. It is, peradventure, worth recounting that in the record of both its precursors and the prevailing post-1945 CT it is easy to trace out the explicit links forged between the CT and art collecting (whether the products collected can be called some such as classical, nineteenth and twentieth century modern art, or contemporary art). A couple of books worth attending to on these matters (I’m sure there are many others) that narrate some of these encounters between high-octane corporate culture and art collecting are:

(A) Vicky Ward, *The Devil’s Casino: Friendship, Betrayal, and the High-Stakes Games Played Inside Lehman Brothers*, John Wiley and Sons, Hoboken, New Jersey, 2010

For example from Ward, the short section quoted below is largely made up of the testimony of Paul Newmark, who was a senior vice-president at Lehman Brothers and treasurer of Lehman Commercial Paper Inc. (LCPI).

“The Lehman partners in the early 1980s regularly ate lavish lunches, washed down with expensive wine and dirty martinis. There was a barber in-house, free cigars (for which the annual bill ran as high as \$30,000), and fresh raspberries at the ready. “Lehman’s dining room, and its chef, was as fine as any restaurant in the world,” recalls Newmark. “It was hard to get a reservation. You had to come with a client. But if you were a partner, you could go up and eat every day. But this wasn’t just ‘Come up and grab a sandwich’. This was a three-course, four-course [meal], the finest food, no expense spared, with cigars, with, alcohol, with wine, and then you had Robert Lehman’s art collection up there, with Picassos and Rembrandts, and all that other good stuff. It was a fascinating place.” p.32

And the following section related to Dick and Kathy Fuld's high profile roles in the administration and fund-raising functions at MoMA in New York.

"Kathy Fuld collected modern art. She particularly liked Cy Twombly, Brice Marden and Jasper Johns. In 2002, she was put on the board of the Museum of Modern Art in New York, and by 2007 was vice chairman. Not only were the wives of Lehman's senior management expected to attend MoMA evenings (along with their husbands) but they also "were told exactly how much they had to donate," says one. There is now a wing of MoMA dedicated to Kathy and Richard S. Fuld Jr." p.128.

(B) William D. Cohan, *The Last Tycoons: The Secret History of Lazard Freres & Co*, Penguin Books Ltd, London, 2008. For example from Cohan, the first quote below relating to Andre Meyer's habits of collecting art, from the point he had to start collecting again post WW2 since the Nazis had confiscated his first collection during their occupation of Paris during the war, and this collection has never resurfaced.

"Undaunted, Andre started collecting anew for his apartment at the Carlyle, but this time with far more passion – not necessarily for the art itself, but for the *idea* that a man in his position, as head of Lazard Freres & Co in New York, should have a world-class art collection. Andre was well aware of the admiration, status and respect that George Blumenthal's passion for art had bestowed upon him in New York, where he was the first Jewish board member of the Metropolitan Museum of Art and had made one of the largest contributions ever of both money and art... Andre's friendly rival, Bobby Lehman – who had taken Blumenthal's seat on the board of the Met ... had a world-class art collection, too, as of course did the David-Weills. 'the difference between Bobby Lehman and Andre', a former Lehman partner once said, "was that Bobby was truly interested in art. For Andre, it was like hunters hanging antlers on the walls." Still, when Lehman would visit Andre at the Carlyle, he would rarely fail to mention his admiration for Andre's collection. ... Actually, according to the many Lazard partners who would be summoned daily to Andre's lair, his art collection was quite something to behold. There was Manet's *Woman in a Fur Coat*, Rembrandt's portrait of Petronella Buys, Picasso's *Boy with a White Collar*. There were priceless works by Renoir, Cezanne, Degas, Bonnard and van Gogh. He once paid \$62,000 for a Pissarro landscape, at the time a record price for the artist. He also collected sculptures by Henry Moore, Picasso and Rodin..." p. 63

On Michel David-Weill's art-collecting habits:

"After all, Michel David-Weill, ... Unerringly courteous, gracious, and polite, described once as "the living legend of French capitalism," is one of the world's wealthiest men. Thanks in large part to the equity he inherited as a direct descendant of the Lazard banking empire, the elfin, cigar-chomping Michel had a net worth in 2000 estimated by *Forbes* to be about \$2.2 billion and supposedly, through his "mysterious labyrinth of interlocking investments" controlled assets "worth five times as much." At that time, even without the multiplier effect, he was listed as the eleventh-wealthiest person in France and owned one of the world's one hundred best private art collections, with a specialty in French paintings from between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries. Indeed as an expression of his love of art, at the end of 2003 he pledged \$10 million for the creation of an English painting gallery at the Louvre. He also has one of the world's mortgage-free and seductively exclusive high-end real estate – where he displays his priceless art – including a Fifth Avenue apartment facing Central Park, a Parisian mansion just off the Boulevard Saint Germain-de-Pres, and massive country homes in Long Island and Cap d'Antibes." p. 182

and between pages 473-76 Cohan remarks more extensively on Michel David-Weill's views, not least via quotes from him, upon Michel's collecting behavior and outlook.

"Unlike Andre, for whom art was part of a stage set, Michel had – and still has – an intense passion for art and art collecting.

... "Dealers are very quick on the ball," he [Michel] explained. "When they know you are less in the market, their solicitation of you decreases rapidly. When you are in the market, it increases radically." Michel fairly blossoms when the opportunity arises to explicate his world-class art collection, which is annually list by *ARTnews* as among the two hundred best on the planet. "When you see Michel looking at a picture or talking about a picture, there is more than knowledge," the art dealer Guy Wildenstein explained. He has incredible knowledge. You can see how he's looking at it – probably like, I would say Robert Parker sips wine, you know? And he sort of enjoying every minute of it ... He is capable of buying something that is really expensive, or something that is not very expensive, but just because he loves it. But the one thing he has to do, he has to love the object. He doesn't buy for investments. He doesn't buy because

he thinks its in fashion. He doesn't buy because he thinks it is going to impress his visitors. He buys because he loves. That's really, really important." p. 473

The above testimony of Wildenstein, concerning love being mysteriously past any epistemological reading out of the meaning of art is very familiar. In one form or another I heard myriad versions of this tale during my nearly fifty years in art schools. It is a widely held sentiment throughout the art world. I have never been convinced of such claims. It is, however, a very important contributor to the mystique holding that art objects transcend the social, and this, in turn, has been a significant component in the campaign through which the Corporate Tyranny has been able to promote the alleged autonomy of the visual over the textual, which itself has been a significant representative of the view that art (beauty) transcends the social – as if high-price auctions at such houses as Sothebys and Christies are somehow dealing in a currency that is above the social events they actually are - and one of the major ideological inputs enabling the Corporate Tyranny to so easily exert its increasing control over the AGMOAS during the twentieth century. Since then the form of the corporate conglomerate (see note 2 below) has become the **dominant form** in financial capitalism and therefore in the make up of the CT.

2. Corporate Tyranny is a term I have copied from Noam Chomsky. I will continue to use it because it is compact. But there is a case too for expanding the name, in order to hint at the massive and dominating penetration of corporate financial culture into the wider culture which might be more accurately descriptive of the tremendous reach that corporate power has attained in the last thirty years of the twentieth century. So whilst the name Corporate Tyranny is formidable enough, it is perhaps worth noting here that some such term as Corporate Conglomerate Tyranny would perhaps reflect the immense global reach that the Corporate Tyranny has attained since the 1970s. An illustrative early case in the development of this ever expanding ambit can be observed in the career, in the 1960s and early 1970s, of Felix Rohatyn's (of Lazard Freres and, later, in 1977, the saviour of the city of New York's entire economy) counseling of mergers he advised Harold Geneen to undertake at ITT (International Telephone and Telegraph Corporation) which transformed ITT from a singular international telecommunications corporation into what became a symbolic multifunctional global conglomerate.

3. The Bretton Woods Accord (or Agreement) was a system devised for management of monetary and exchange rate control. The Accord was finally put together at the United Nations Monetary and Financial Conference held at Bretton Woods, New Hampshire, July 1 to 22, 1944. My fifth birthday took place during the period. At that time, **obviously I guess**, I knew nothing of its future importance for the structure and resourcing of the future British state education system, through which my generation (and the two succeeding generations) would be passed.

The Bretton Woods Conference initiated many of what have become during the succeeding part of the twentieth century iconic public international arrangements. But the major financial ones were largely extirpated by the mid-seventies through the enactment of what is called the Nixon Shock (see note 4 below). Of the institutions set up at the Bretton Woods Conference that remain today, perhaps two of the most publicly conspicuous ones are, for example, the International Monetary Fund (hereafter IMF) and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (hereafter IBRD). Practically all the institutions still operative have been since the 1970s increasingly under the control (ie occupied by the representatives of) of the CT.

Amongst the arrangements set up at the Bretton Woods Conference perhaps the most important one to have been closed down is the arrangement introducing a currency agreement that pegged currencies to gold and which gave the IMF authority to intervene when an imbalance of payments happened. The gold standard arrangement disappeared under the moves of the Nixon Shock, the latter half of the arrangement, IMF intervention, is still virulently active – as, for example, the Greeks have recently experienced, and to which many non-Western countries have been recurrently exposed for many decades.

The Bretton Woods Accord took place towards the end of World War 2, and the financial arrangements were directed toward fulfilling the requirement for the rebuilding of the economies devastated by World War 2. Initially gold served as the reserve base currency in these arrangements, but the US dollar soon gained the momentum to act as the de facto base currency.

4. The definition of the Nixon Shock given by *Investopedia* is as follows.

“A term used to describe the actions taken by the former U.S. President Richard Nixon in 1971 that eventually led to the collapse of the Bretton Woods system. The policies imposed and the actions taken by President Nixon included imposing a 90-day wage and price freeze in America, a 10% import surcharge and, most notably, closing the gold window, effectively making the U.S. dollar inconvertible to gold.”

Investopedia further goes on to explain that the ramifications of Nixon Shock rocked the global economic landscape. By closing the gold window, the United States made it impossible for other nations to peg their currency to the gold standard, which was the underlying principle behind the financial arrangements agreed and set up in the Bretton Woods Accord. As a direct result of the economic policies imposed by the United States in 1971, the gold standard was all but abandoned and the world's major currencies began to float.

5. During the late eighties and throughout the nineties it was not unusual to see the visible symptoms of the conversion of any, even minimal, aspiration toward achieving a cognitively weighted art practice into an entrepreneurial loaded art practice. One of the most vivid affirmations I remember illustrating the success of this conversion is that of visiting the fine art degree course final year exhibition at the then Leeds Polytechnic (now Leeds Metropolitan University) where each student's exhibition was fronted by the presentation of business cards and other paraphernalia of corporate presentation.

6. *Critical Décor: What Works*, Terry Atkinson, Lanchester Gallery Projects, Coventry, January-February 2014, p. 66

7. During the 1960s artists began to use materials and fabrication systems to make their work which had little or no association with the established lexicon of materials that had been used in making art up to that time. In the early sixties there was a specific art magazine campaign around what was then called some such as Minimalism, ABC Art, etc. (See, for example, ABC Art, Barbara Rose, *Art in America*, October, 1965). This campaign centred on work made by artists such as Andre, Flavin, Morris, Judd, LeWitt. In the case of artists such as, for example, Robert Smithson, Michael Heizer and Christo their outdoor-cum-landscape projects of the later sixties/early 70s exemplified the use of materials that were hitherto completely unfamiliar in the making of art.

8. During the late sixties/early seventies Art & Language were frequently accused of making work that was not art, especially in relation to their text works (not least the magazine *Art-Language*). I recall that Michael Baldwin and myself when giving talks at various art schools were repeatedly accused of claiming work to be art that was not perceived as art – or, if you like, was perceived as some such as not-art. Such occasions always had a kind of neat ironic tinge about them – since we used to chuckle to each other that we were being invited to talk in art schools about work that was, according to the accusation, not-art. We toyed with the idea once of writing an essay in *Art-Language* titled some such as The Art of Not-Arting. I guess in the end the topic was not engaging enough, it did not seem a substantial enough topic and therefore not worth the effort, it very rapidly became a weak joke with no bite in it. The argument today is an old chestnut seemingly with little plausibility, and, in my case at least, it is still an accusation that I do not really engage with much, except that from time to time I find myself writing paragraphs such as this one. Since the last half of the sixties I have tended to use as a measure of judging work worth engaging with as being dependent on criteria of whether or not it is interesting rather than whether or not it is art – the latter of which seems not interesting. How to define “interesting” here – that is itself troublesome enough to be interesting!

9. *The Enigma of Capitalism*, David Harvey, Kindle edition, 61%

10. For a brief outline of the history, development and current status of the Zapatista Army of Liberation see the entry in *Wikipedia*.

11. Harvey, 62%

12. *Critical Décor: What Works*, JCHP, p.62

13. One way in which Rimbaud seems to have been constrained is in the sense that he stopped making poetry, he ceased to be a poet. In the event of him ceasing to be a poet and becoming a trader in East Africa, it is possible to at least surmise that he gave up poetry because he judged poetry to be inadequate in some sense - at a minimum, staying producing poetry did not have a sufficient enough hold on him to stop him from going to East Africa. How far this might have been the result of a disenchantment brought on by the events of the early seventies, say, the failure of the Paris Commune and/or say his torrid friendship with Verlaine is open to speculation. For an engaging and informative biography of Rimbaud, see *Rimbaud*, Graham Robb, W.W. Norton & Company, New York, 2000.

14. The question of what is and what is not art can be characterized as an attempt to locate a boundary – see notes 7 and 8 above, for example.

BIOGRAPHIES

TERRY ATKINSON:

Terry Atkinson was born in 1939 in the mining village of Turnsoe. He left in 1960 to attend the Slade Art School in London. In 1963 he formed a group called Fine Artz and then in 1968, he was one of the co-founders of the collaborative art group and leading force in conceptual art, Art & Language, centred at Coventry School of Art, where Atkinson taught between October 1966 and July 1973. In 1974, increasingly disenchanted with the direction of the group's activities, Atkinson left Art & Language and has since worked independently. His work since the mid 1970s has nearly always used a relatively secure range of two-dimensional art objects (the Trotsky Postcards, Happysnap/Historysnap series, Stonetouchers, Irish Works, for example). By 'secure' here is meant a range of objects, the ontology of which is securely associated with art as art. His practice has consistently shifted in terms of the issues addressed. The 'World War I' works of the late 1970s raised some notion of history painting in the traditional guise of figurative imagery, which Atkinson was also to use through the early 1980s in a series of works dealing with the politics of the Cold War, as well as histories closer to home, especially that of Anglo-Irish relations. The conflict in Northern Ireland has been a recurrent theme in Atkinson's work since, particularly with the Goya Series, which also marked a shift from the use of figurative imagery to the resources of modernist abstraction, a move that Atkinson made partially as a response to his characterisation as a 'political artist' at the time of his nomination for the Turner Prize in 1985.

After 1985, Atkinson's practice became concerned with developing a less secure set of resources of expression, attempting to focus on the construction of artistic identity and subjectivity in a more argumentative way than those allowing such comforting career settlements as, say, painter or political artist, or even, artist. After the defeat of the Miners Strike in 1985, which confirmed an already substantial disenchantment with the Labour Party, Atkinson resolved to spend absolutely no time at all on political activism which, in turn, released huge chunks of time for further concentration on his practice. One of the primary luxuries of the access to these new chunks of time was that he was able to up his reading in philosophy of mind, cognitive science and Artificial Intelligence, interests that figured in pre and early art and Language concerns. The Grease Works (1987-93) were a first move from the increase, freed from this reading, being an attempt to mimic a hardware/software interface, running the grease as a software programme upon the hardware of conventional pictorial architecture (constructions). The Signature Works (1991-)

were another move to distend the representation 'artist'. Since parting with Art and Language in 1974, long periods of Atkinson's practice have been, subsumed under the conventional resources of 'the visual'. Since 1986, a concern with moves other than those which lead to the hegemony of 'the visual' have been an increasing presence in the conception of his work. Recently Atkinson has been making robots as an attempt to make a representer rather than a representation, especially a visual representation. The question of circumnavigating the limits of 'the visual' seems, currently, to be a priority in Atkinson's work, or at least in some of it. From 1977 until 2002 Atkinson was Reader in Rhetorics and the Practices of Fine Art at the University of Leeds.

Atkinson's work has been exhibited widely throughout Britain, Europe, Canada and the USA. He has had major solo shows at the Whitechapel Art Gallery in 1983, Gimpel Fils (1985-1991), Royal Leamington Spa, Art Gallery (2003), Leeds City Art gallery (2004) and Stampa Gallery in Basel. He has exhibited in group shows at Documenta 5 (1972), Museum of Modern Art in New York (1970), Venice Biennale (1984) and Irish Museum of Modern Art (1991). In 1985 he was nominated for the Turner Prize.

Atkinson has continued to write extensively, his published work ranges across the theoretical foundations of his practice as well as critical writings on the work of other artists. He has published numerous essays, in Art-Language between 1967-73, Studio International (1970-72), and in major contemporary art journals from the early 1970s to the present day.

JEFFREY CHARLES HENRY PEACOCK:

Jeffrey Charles Henry Peacock is the sole collective practice of Dave Smith (Derby, Derbyshire, UK, 1972) and Thom Winterburn (Leeds, West Yorkshire, UK, 1970).

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Lanchester Gallery Projects (LGP) is a curatorial research project that ran a contemporary art programme from January 2012 to March 2014. LGP examined the conditions, task and terminology of the art institution through a multifaceted programme of exhibitions, publications, residencies, education and events.

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